

William Murdoch and Wives

Janet Lennox

Mary Reid Lindsay

William Murdoch was the eighth child and youngest son of James and Mary Murray Murdoch. He was born at Gaswater, Ayrshire, Scotland, July 3, 1825. He was christened July 24, 1825, in the Parish Church at Auchinleck. His parents were Presbyterians. His early history is one of hardship and trial. He was only six years of age when his father died, October 20, 1831, leaving his mother in very humble circumstances. The father lost his life trying to rescue a young man by the name of George Baird of Dalford, who had gone down into a mine shaft and was overcome by "black damp." They both died.

Just as soon as he was old enough to herd a few sheep on the bonnie heathered hills close by, he was hired out to do that kind of work, to earn a little to help provide for himself and assist his widowed mother. She saw to it that he had a little schooling during the winter months. He was provided with yarn by his thrifty mother, and he learned to knit stockings for himself and others. Very shortly before his death, he knitted a pair of stockings for each of his children. When nearly twenty years of age, William went to work in the coal mines. Wages for farm work were very low and he wanted to earn more money so he could someday marry and have a home of his own.

He soon found in the person of a very choice young woman who lived nearby named Janet or "Jessie" Lennox, a suitable mate, and they were married June 23, 1846, at Old Cumnock, Ayrshire, Scotland. Janet Lennox and William Murdoch's first child was a girl whom they named Elizabeth after her grandmother. She was born to them while they were living in Gaswater, Ayrshire, Scotland in 1847. Next to be born were two sons. James "D", in 1850, was named after William's father, and David Lennox, in 1852, was named after Janet's father. Both boys were born in a place called Cronberry, Ayrshire, Scotland. Then came a daughter in 1854 whom they named Mary after her grandmother Mary Murray Murdoch. However, to their sorrow she lived only eleven days and then was interred in Auchinleck Churchyard. Their third daughter was born in 1855 and was named Janet after her mother. Both Mary and Janet had been born in Gaswater also. The sixth and last child, Margaret, was born in 1858 in Ponesk, Ayrshire, Scotland. They again had cause to sorrow when their oldest daughter, Elizabeth, passed away in her seventeenth year in 1864. She was buried in Muirkirk, Ayrshire, Scotland where they were living and her mother was placed beside her in 1877.

A few years after William's marriage, his brother John, sister Mary, and his mother joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and shortly afterwards his wife Janet became convinced that it was the true church and was baptized October 8, 1853, by James Gallacher. William at this time could see no need of his making a change. He was already a member of the good old Church of Scotland that his forefathers had lived and died members of. They were all good, honest, religious people, and he felt sure they were safe in heaven, so why should he make a change? He was highly respected in the community and it was considered a disgrace to join the despised Mormons. His wife, though, fully convinced of the truth, went about her daily tasks quietly so as to keep peace and love in the home. She cherished the hope that at some future time her husband would come to see the truth and beauty of the gospel. She wanted also to teach it to her children, and ultimately go to Zion and make her home among the Saints in Utah.

Uncle Willie, as he was usually called, was a very steady, sober man, very dependable, trustworthy, and a willing worker. He did well in a temporal way and in time became underground manager in one of the coal pits owned by the Eglinton Coal and Iron Company. He lived in the village of Muirkirk, Ayrshire, Scotland where he was considered one of the most prominent men in the village. Getting better pay than the common miners, he was able to and did send his two sons, James "D" and David L., to some of the best schools in the country after they graduated from the village school. They both received a very good education and they became prominent young men in the community where they lived.

Uncle Willie, knowing the faith and hope his dear wife had cherished for so many years and seeing her health failing day by day, came to the conclusion that he had not really taken the interest he should have taken in his dear wife's ideas regarding religion. Now that she seemed likely to be taken by death in a very short time, he began to investigate the doctrines of the Latter-day Saints. In a short time he and his daughters Janet and Margaret were baptized October 8, 1877, by Elder David Milne, just two months before his dear Jessie, as he called her, passed away.

Before Jessie passed away she had the blessed assurance that as soon as convenient her husband and the family would make their home among the Saints in Utah. She died in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland on December 20, 1877. She was an exceptional woman in more ways than one. In death she rejoiced in seeing her fond hopes realized and could lay her weary, wasted body calmly down to rest in peace in the Kirkyard at Muirkirk, where their daughter Elizabeth had been buried some years before. Having performed the sad task of laying the body of his dear Jessie in the silent grave, William and his daughters continued to live in Gilmour Street, Kilmarnock until they had all arrangements made for going to Utah.

About the first of May 1878, they left Kilmarnock and went by train to Glasgow, where they joined David and his young wife. John Adamson, a young man who was engaged to marry his daughter, Margaret, was with them. From Glasgow they went to Liverpool where they joined a company of Mormon emigrants on board a steamship in which they crossed the Atlantic Ocean in about ten days. They left May 24, 1878, on the steamship Nevada. Very different was this voyage from the nine weeks spent by Uncle John on the sailing ship in 1852 with poor accommodations and very little food to eat. Accommodations on the steamship were very good and the food good and plentiful, so they missed most of the trying experiences of early-day travel on their journey to Utah. The journey by train from New York was finished in three days, so that it was only two weeks from Kilmarnock to Salt Lake City.

Letters had been received stating the date of their leaving Liverpool and their probable arrival in Utah. Uncle John, William M. Giles, and William Lindsay met them in Salt Lake City with two teams of horses and wagons. They prepared to take them to Uncle John's home in Heber.

The trip from Salt Lake to Heber took just one long day. They all arrived safely in Heber the next day and the brothers and sisters met, having been separated many years. It was a joyful meeting. At last they were all reunited in this blessed land and all were now members of the true church. They had left their homes and native land to cast their lot with the Saints in Utah's peaceful valleys.

Much credit is due to Uncle Willie. After he did become convinced of the truth, he gave up a good position where he was respected in his community, and in his old age came to a new country, among strangers, to make a new home. However, they all seemed contented and went to work at any little job they could find.

On June 29, 1882, in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City, Utah, William married again to a woman named Christina Graham. She was also born in Scotland and had been baptized earlier, when about twelve years old. This marriage wasn't entirely satisfactory and they later divorced. They had no children.

Uncle Willie bought a land claim up on Lake Creek, four miles east of Heber, and also a team of horses. With the help of his son-in-law John Adamson, they built houses, stables, sheds, and fences. Soon they had one of the best farms on Lake Creek. Of course they had to hire help until they learned how to irrigate the crops and many other things, but they had the money to do so. Uncle Willie's experience on the farm as a young boy with cattle and sheep and horses was a valuable asset to him now. In order to irrigate part of his land it was necessary to make a new irrigation ditch in which about twelve other farmers were interested further down the ditch. They all agreed to help put the ditch clear through so all could get the use of the water. Some of them seemed to have no further interest in it after it reached their land, but Uncle Willie, although his land was at the

head of the ditch, helped through to the lower end, so all could benefit. John Adamson, Margaret's husband, helped him considerably the first five or six years. He stayed with him until the farm was fenced and under cultivation.

William Murdoch became an American citizen March 18, 1884. He received his temple endowment June 29, 1882. About 1887, he married Mary Reid Lindsay, the widow of Samuel Lindsay, who had four children, the oldest being fourteen at the time of their marriage. William and Mary had three children: a son named William Louis and two daughters, Mary Murray and Lizziebell. Uncle Willie was quite robust, even in his old age, and a very industrious man. He was sixty-nine years old at the birth of his last child.

When about seventy-five years of age he sold his farm and bought a house and lot in Heber, where he lived some twelve or thirteen years. He was cautious in making transactions, but once made, he would stand by them regardless of the consequences. He was honest and honorable in his dealings with his fellow men. Being very industrious himself, he despised laziness and shiftlessness in others.

He held the office of a high priest in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for some years before his death, which took place on March 12, 1913.

Uncle Willie was a highly respected member of the community and left a splendid record behind him as a true friend, a good neighbor, and a respectable citizen. He set a good example in every way for his children and grandchildren to follow. He had a total of nine children and thirty-eight grandchildren. Many good things were said of him at his funeral services. He had filled a long life of usefulness, being eighty-eight years of age at the time of his death. He was buried in the Heber City Cemetery.

(From writings of William Lindsay.)

